A teaching environment for learning soft skills applicable to Information Systems Development

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Philosophiae Doctor (Information Technology)

in the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology

at the

University of Pretoria

Pretoria, South Africa

November 2000
ABSTRACT

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DEGREE: Philosophiae Doctor (Information Technology)
KEYWORDS: Information Systems Education, Joint Application Development, JAD, co-operative learning, soft skills development, diversity, actor-network theory.

Information Systems development (ISD) is a complex, social process. The art of Information Systems (IS) development has changed over the years and there has been a growing recognition that Systems Analysts need more than just technical skills in order to do their job. Developing these skills, along with the technical skills is the challenge facing IS lecturers today.

IS departments at tertiary institutions have tended to prepare students very well for the technical needs of systems development. They have given the students the tools and techniques that they need to develop systems in a mechanistic way. There, has been some neglect of the skills that the students need in order to be able to find shared meanings, practise argumentation and be effective in working with users, however. This does not mean that the technical should be neglected, but that students should be able to augment their technical skills with business and interpersonal skills.

This research determined a method by which the techniques of Joint Application Development (JAD) workshops could be combined with the techniques of co-operative learning in order to create an environment where students could learn the soft skills that they need while also learning the modelling skills that are necessary for Information Systems development. The research followed a cyclical pattern of reflecting on the situation, doing literature studies to determine how the learning environment needed to be adapted, working out a theoretical framework for the learning environment, applying the learning methodology and analysing the results obtained from that situation.
The result of the research was a framework that was developed that showed how the JAD and co-operative learning techniques could be used effectively in a classroom with diverse students.
I declare that

A teaching environment for learning soft skills applicable to Information Systems Development

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

T A Thomas
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my promoter, Carina de Villiers, for her patience, dedication and quick response whenever it was needed. Her comments were most valuable and were greatly appreciated.

Thanks are also due to Rosanette du Toit, Julia Prior and Robert Gerber who acted as observers in the classroom during Case Studies 2, 3 and 4.

My thanks also go to Piet Boonzaaier who helped to edit this thesis. Without his help many grammar errors would have gone undetected.

I would like especially to thank my husband, Albert, and my children, Bronwyn and Lloyd, who put up with my having "Mommy’s time" during the writing of this thesis.

My thanks also go to the Port Elizabeth Technikon and the National Research Foundation who helped with finances for the research and for travelling around the country.
# Table of Contents

List of Figures ................................................................. ix  

List of Tables ................................................................. x  

**Chapter 1: Introduction** .................................................. 1  

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM ...................................... 1 
1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS ................................................ 3  
  1.2.1 What is......................................................... 3 
  1.2.2 Why is......................................................... 4 
  1.2.3 How does..................................................... 4 
  1.2.4 How should................................................... 4 
1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES ................................................ 5 
1.4 METHODOLOGY .......................................................... 5 
1.5 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH ......................................... 8 
1.6 A ROAD MAP TO THE THESIS ......................................... 8  

**Chapter 2: Research Methodology** ................................. 12  

2.1 INTRODUCTION ............................................................ 14 
2.2 RESEARCH PARADIGMS ............................................... 15  
  2.2.1 Positivist Paradigm .......................................... 17 
  2.2.2 Interpretive Paradigm ....................................... 20 
  2.2.3 Critical Theory Paradigm ................................... 25 
  2.2.4 Pluralistic Approaches ...................................... 30 
2.3 RESEARCH DESIGNS FOR IN-CONTEXT RESEARCH ............... 32  
  2.3.1 Survey research .............................................. 33 
  2.3.2 Experimental designs ....................................... 34 
  2.3.3 Action Research .............................................. 36
Chapter 3: Social Issues in Information Systems Development

3.1 A FRAMEWORK FOR ISD
3.1.1 Behavioural orientations
3.1.2 Domains of change
3.1.3 Federated framework
3.1.4 Development strategies across the orientations

3.2 USER PARTICIPATION
3.2.1 Levels of user participation
3.2.2 An historical perspective of user participation
3.2.3 Effective user participation

3.3 SKILLS NEEDED BY IS PROFESSIONALS

3.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR IS CURRICULA AT TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

3.5 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4: Joint Application Development

4.1 THE JAD PARTICIPANTS
4.1.1 The users
4.1.2 The IT specialists
4.1.3 The facilitator
Chapter 5: Learning by Co-operation ............................................. 89

5.1 LEARNING THEORIES ......................................................... 90
  5.1.1 Piaget’s Sociocognitive Learning theory ................................ 90
  5.1.2 Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Learning Theory .......................... 91
  5.1.3 Social Constructivism .................................................. 93

5.2 COLLABORATIVE AND CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING ............... 98
  5.2.1 What are collaborative and co-operative learning? .................. 99
  5.2.2 Essential features of effective co-operative learning ............... 100
  5.2.3 Advantages of co-operative learning .............................. 103
  5.2.4 Problems with group work ......................................... 107
  5.2.5 Implementing effective co-operative learning ...................... 109
  5.2.6 Circles of learning co-operative learning method ................ 118

5.3 SUMMARY ......................................................................... 120

Chapter 6: Diversity in the classroom ........................................... 121

6.1 WHAT IS MEANT BY DIVERSITY? ......................................... 122
Chapter 8: Using JAD and co-operative learning in the classroom .......................... 167

8.1 USING JAD IN THE CLASSROOM: CASE STUDY 1 .......................... 170
  8.1.1 Preparatory sessions - Case Study 1 .................................. 170
  8.1.2 Running the JAD sessions in the classroom - Case Study 1 .................. 170
  8.1.3 Original framework for the use of JAD in the classroom ..................... 173
  8.1.4 An overview of the results of the pilot case study .......................... 176
  8.1.5 Reflections on Case Study 1 .............................................. 183

8.2 USING JAD AND CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES:
  CASE STUDY 2 ................................................................. 183
  8.2.1 Preparatory group skills awareness - Case Study 2 .......................... 184
  8.2.2 Running the JAD sessions - Case Study 2 ................................ 186
  8.2.3 The circles of learning co-operative learning method as applied to JAD ................................................. 189
  8.2.4 A framework for the use of JAD and co-operative learning in the classroom ................................................................. 191
  8.2.5 An overview of the results of Case Study 2 ................................ 193
  8.2.6 An overview of group questionnaire and observation results - Case study 2 ........................................................... 201
  8.2.7 Assessment of students learning - Case Study 2 ............................ 202
  8.2.8 Reflections on the Case Study 2 ............................................. 204

8.3 USING JAD AND CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING: CASE STUDY 3 ........ 205
  8.3.1 Preparatory group skills awareness - Case Study 3 .......................... 206
  8.3.2 Running the JAD sessions - Case Study 3 ................................ 206
  8.3.3 An overview of results of the main questionnaire - Case study 3 ....... 207
  8.3.4 Overview of group questionnaires and observations of the groups - Case Study 3 ......................................................... 214
  8.3.5 Reflections on Case Study 3 ................................................ 215

8.4 IMPLEMENTING IDEAS FOR HANDLING DIVERSITY: CASE STUDY 4 ... 216
  8.4.1 Methods of dealing with diversity already in the learning
8.4.2 Modifications to the learning environment for catering for diversity . 218
8.4.3 Framework for using JAD and co-operative learning with a
diverse student population ......................................... 220
8.4.4 An overview of the results of Case Study 4 ...................... 222
8.4.5 Evaluation of group processing - Case Study 4 ................. 235
8.4.6 Assessment of students' learning - Case Study 4 ............... 237
8.4.7 Reflections on Case Study 4 ................................... 238
8.5 CONCLUSION ................................................................ 240

Chapter 9: A Framework for the use of JAD and co-operative
learning methods in the classroom ................................. 241

9.1 DESIRED LEARNING OUTCOMES ................................. 244
9.2 THE USE OF JAD IN THE CLASSROOM ......................... 244
9.3 CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING METHODS .......................... 245
9.4 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING THEORY ............... 246
9.5 WORKING WITH DIVERSE STUDENTS .......................... 248
9.6 BUILDING THE FRAMEWORK ..................................... 248
9.7 THE EXPANDED NETWORK ....................................... 250
9.8 CONCLUSION ................................................................ 251

Chapter 10: Evaluation and conclusions ............................. 252

10.1 ANSWERING OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS ............... 252
    10.1.1 What is...........................................? .................. 252
    10.1.2 Why .................................................? ............. 255
    10.1.3 How does.................................? .................... 255
    10.1.4 How should.................................? ................. 256
10.2 EVALUATION OF RESEARCH ................................. 257
    10.2.1 Evaluation according to seven principles of interpretive
field studies ................................................................. 258
10.2.2 Authenticity, plausibility and criticality ......................... 262
10.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH .............................. 264
10.4 FUTURE RESEARCH .................................................. 268
10.4.1 Applying the framework in different cultural environments ... 268
10.4.2 Applying the framework in non-IS subjects ....................... 269
10.4.3 Co-operative learning techniques in JAD in industry .......... 269
10.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS ............................................ 270

References ................................................................. 272

Appendix A: Questionnaires ............................................ 304
A.1 QUESTIONNAIRE ON YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH JAD - CASE STUDY 1. 305
A.2 QUESTIONNAIRE ON YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH JAD - CASE STUDY 2. 309
A.3 QUESTIONNAIRE ON YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH JAD - CASE STUDY 3 . 313
A.4 QUESTIONNAIRE ON YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH JAD - CASE STUDY 4 . 317
A.5 GROUP EVALUATION .................................................. 321
A.6 BUDDY/ SELF RATING ................................................ 323
A.7 BUSINESS SKILLS .................................................... 324

Appendix B: Case Study Results ....................................... 325
B.1 RESULTS OF CASE STUDY 1 .......................................... 325
  B.1.1 Working in groups - Case Study 1 ................................. 325
  B.1.2 Learning in groups - Case Study 1 ............................... 327
  B.1.3 Facilitation and language - Case Study 1 ....................... 327
  B.1.4 Use of JAD - Case Study 1 ........................................ 328
B.2 RESULTS OF CASE STUDY 2 .......................................... 328
  B.2.1 Main questionnaire results - Case Study 2 .................. 329
Appendix C: JAD Exercises ........................................... 366

C.1 JAD EXERCISE EXAMPLE - THE LIBRARY - CASE STUDY 1 .......... 366
C.2 JAD EXERCISE EXAMPLE - THE LIBRARY .............................. 367
C.3 JAD EXERCISE EXAMPLE - THE GROCERY STORE ..................... 368
List of Figures

1.1 Research approach used .................................................. 7
1.2 A Road map to the thesis .................................................. 9

2.1 An IS research framework for in-context research .................... 16
2.2 The Critical Social Theory and Practice Change Process ............. 28
2.3 Methods to use for in-context IS research .............................. 32
2.4 The process of action research ............................................ 38

4.1 Uses for JAD in the Systems Development Life Cycle ............... 72
4.2 A typical JAD room ....................................................... 79

7.1 Convergence process ........................................................ 153
7.2 Actor-network group decisions - process variables .................... 157
7.3 The actors in the JAD workshop ........................................... 161
7.4 An actor-network framework for the use of JAD in industry ........ 163

8.1 Layout of the classroom .................................................... 171
8.2 Actors in the learning environment network .......................... 173
8.3 The JAD workshop in the classroom .................................... 174
8.4 A framework for the use of JAD in the classroom ..................... 176
8.5 A revised framework for the use of JAD and co-operative learning in the classroom .................................................. 192
8.6 Framework for the use of JAD and co-operative learning in a classroom with diverse students ................................. 221

9.1 A framework for the use of JAD and co-operative learning in the classroom .................................................. 243

B.1 Scatter plot showing pre- and post-test results - Case Study 2 ....... 340
B.2 Scatter plot showing pre- and post-test results - Case Study 4 ........ 359
List of Tables

3.1 A federated framework for ISD ........................................ 49
3.2 Capabilities and knowledge expected for IS program graduates .... 67

8.1 Overview of Case Studies .............................................. 169
8.2 Circles of learning method and JAD method ............................ 190
8.3 Cross-tabulation of pre- and post-test results - Case Study 2 ........ 203
8.4 Cross-tabulation of pre- and post-test results - Case Study 4 ......... 238

9.1 A comparison of suggestions from social constructivist learning theory
and the learning environment developed .................................... 247

B.1 Group processing at time 1 and time 3 .................................. 334
B.2 Observer versus self evaluation of group processing - Time 3 ........... 337
B.3 T-test results for marks for Use-Cases .................................. 340
B.4 Group processing evaluation - self and observer ......................... 346
B.5 Group processing at time 1 and time 3 .................................. 356
B.6 T-test results for marks for Use-Cases .................................. 359
B.7 Comparison of composition of students across four case studies ...... 361
B.8 Comparison of group experiences over the four case studies ........... 362
B.9 Comparison of learning in groups across the case studies .............. 363
B.10 Facilitation and Language - comparison across the case studies ...... 364
B.11 Usefulness of JAD - comparison across the case studies ............... 365